

NATO Partnerships for Women, Peace, and Security

Lisa A. Aronsson





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Cover: Members of SWISSCOY assessing the situation. The Swiss Armed Forces have been participating in the Kosovo Force (KFOR) with SWISSCOY since 1999 and have been using the so-called Liaison and Monitoring Teams (LMT) since 2010. These observation teams serve KFOR as an early warning system for potential changes in the situation. The members of the LMT work as conversation leaders and observers in a defined area of responsibility in the operational area. *Source: SWISSINT/Philip Kessler. License: CC BY-NC-ND (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).*

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Executive Summary

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda is a global, thematic agenda that calls for progress toward gender equality and justice as a foundation for peace and security. It was launched with the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) adoption of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (UNSCR 1325) in October 2000. UNSCR 1325 formally recognized the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls for the first time, as well as the crucial role that women play in all security and peace processes. It also recognized the gendered nature of international peace and security, and established a legal and political framework for incorporating gender perspectives into defense and security policies. UNSCR 1325 called on the United Nations member states to develop strategies to protect women and girls in violent conflict, as well as to increase women's participation in decision making at all levels, in all mechanisms, and at all stages of conflict.

Since 2000, the WPS agenda has become a broader and more ambitious social movement that engages a diverse group of stakeholders, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). A handful of NATO allies and partner states were among the first to recognize its importance, adopt a National Action Plan on 1325, and begin work toward implementation at the national and then regional level, eventually leading to NATO's adoption of a WPS common policy in 2007. Implementing UNSCR 1325 initially required NATO to look beyond incorporating gender into NATO's missions, but also called for the Alliance to

transform its own organizational culture. NATO partners continue to play an integral role in advancing WPS implementation by working in coordination with key formal NATO structures like the Partnerships and Cooperative Security Committee, as well as with non-state actors such as the private sector and other international organizations.

As NATO looks to implement recommendations from the NATO 2030 Reflection Group's report and begins revising or updating its Strategic Concept, this paper argues that the WPS agenda should be core to NATO's forward-looking strategic objectives. This paper outlines the achievements and the implementation challenges NATO faces, and offers three sets of recommendations for overcoming institutional hurdles, leveraging non-NATO members, and reviving its sense of purpose on WPS. First and foremost, the Alliance should focus on balancing the operational focus with an internal focus, and move WPS away from the political margins and closer to NATO's core. This requires doubling down on implementation of NATO's robust policies and action plans and strengthening institutional and financial support for its WPS transformations. Second, NATO should consider expanding WPS cooperation with partners across a range of activities from education and training to capacity building, interoperability, and reform. It should also expand collaboration with non-state partners and civil society organizations. Finally, NATO should recommit to WPS publicly with a renewed sense of purpose and a clear and simple message about the strategic relevance of WPS for twenty-first century security.

Introduction

The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda is a global, thematic agenda that calls for progress toward gender equality and justice as a foundation for peace and security. It was launched with the United Nations Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (UNSCR 1325 or 1325) in October 2000. With this resolution, the Security Council formally recognized the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls for the first time, as well as the crucial role that women play in all security and peace processes. It also recognized the gendered nature of international peace and security, and established a legal and political framework for incorporating gender perspectives into defense and security policies. UNSCR 1325 called on the United Nations (UN) member states to develop strategies to protect women and girls in violent conflict, as well as strategies to increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels, in all mechanisms, and at all stages of conflict. The Security Council adopted nine follow up resolutions, and collectively these resolutions constitute the founding documents for the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

Since its launch in 2000, the Women, Peace, and Security agenda has developed into a broader and more ambitious social movement. It builds on decades of efforts by civil society groups, and women's and human rights defenders around the world, to draw attention to these issues at the highest international level. The movement has gained significant political traction, including within the transatlantic defense alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). A handful of NATO allies and partner states were among the first to recognize its importance, adopt National Action Plans on 1325, and begin work toward implementation at the national and then at the regional level. By 2007, NATO and its partners had adopted a common policy on 1325. They began engaging civil society. They deployed gender advisors into their missions and operations, and over time developed an array of policies and mechanisms to incorporate gender into all NATO civilian and military activities. Initially focused on operations, NATO realized that WPS calls for more radical, institutional transformation. It is not sufficient to focus on protection and women's participation. It requires transforming institutions, mindsets, and organizational culture to ensure that all have opportunities to make full and meaningful contributions.

Twenty years on, NATO finds itself at a crossroads, and there is a risk that the WPS agenda could lose its political momentum within the Alliance. Allies and partners are adapting to a complex and more competitive international environment. Their conception of security has broadened significantly to include challenges related to climate, energy, information, and public health. And yet, the Alliance still has to address conventional and hybrid threats from Russia and come to terms with the complex set of challenges from China. In the past, NATO partnerships have proven a valuable means of pursuing shared objectives, shaping the environment, and expanding geographical space for NATO's values. As NATO adapts again, it will seek to strengthen its approach to cooperative or shared security, and it should ensure WPS remains central in its relationships with its partner states and organizations. Otherwise, WPS could come to be seen as "outdated," or associated with past missions and operations before it has achieved its objectives, rather than as a crucial element in a strategy oriented towards the future. This would not only jeopardize what has already been achieved but would also have rippling effects on states and militaries around the world.

This paper examines NATO's historical approach to WPS with a focus on partnerships and cooperative or shared security. It traces NATO and partner efforts to implement UNSCR 1325 collectively; analyzes the ways in which they worked together, and at odds, to build a strategy for 1325; and it argues that partners played a crucial role in bringing WPS to NATO's attention and shaping the regional strategy that has since been recognized as exemplary for other organizations.¹ As NATO begins discussions for an updated Strategic Concept, it should maintain a strong policy focus on WPS both internally and across its core tasks. It should attempt to "bring the WPS agenda home"² while expanding collaboration with new partners and recommitting to WPS with a renewed sense of purpose. This commitment should be forward-looking and resonate with NATO's overall strategic objectives. By moving WPS from the political margins to its core, NATO can strengthen its resilience and improve its ability to confront systemic rivals, and address complex global challenges. Implementing WPS is both an end in and of itself, and a means to another end—it can help NATO reach its 2030 objectives to "stay strong militarily, strengthen politically, and expand its global reach."³

1 Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: a Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015), https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf.

2 Mariët Schuurman, *Connections* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 1-6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26326405>.

3 These were NATO's 2030 objectives as outlined by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in the launch of his reflection process in 2020. It should be noted that the group of experts is gender balanced, with 50 percent female participation.

Women, Peace, and Security Agenda

Twenty years after UNSCR 1325, the WPS agenda is commonly understood among scholars and practitioners as the UN-sponsored legal and political framework for incorporating gender analysis and gender perspectives into international peace and security. It is also a set of emerging global gender norms and a global social movement with ambitious aims to transform gender power relationships all over the world in order to help “prevent conflict, transform justice, and secure peace.”⁴ The Women, Peace, and Security agenda is not a transatlantic agenda, but a global one. Its roots connect to women’s movements and human rights activists all over the world, which in the West date back to World War I feminist movements that sought an end to the war through international negotiations. The agenda has also been shaped over the decades by civil society organizations and United Nations Conferences and activities. In 1995, the UN World Conference on Women brought together 189 countries in Beijing, China to discuss issues related to gender, peace, and security, as a parallel meeting convened some 40,000 members of women’s civil society and human rights groups. These meetings brought the world’s attention to gender concerns and established a clear set of policy objectives—the Beijing Platform of Action—which promoted women’s participation and protection in conflict among its core objectives.

The Beijing Conference and civil society activism helped pave the way for the UN Security Council’s adoption of Resolution 1325 five years later. This UNSC resolution is widely considered to be a “landmark resolution” because it established legally binding responsibilities for states to incorporate gender perspectives into their defense and security institutions and processes. It is commonly understood as establishing four pillars for gender in policy-making: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery.⁵ The first pillar, prevention, calls for strategies

to reduce conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (CRSGBV), and for the application of all bodies of national and international law to all women’s experiences in conflict. The second pillar, participation, calls for increasing female participation in decision-making roles in all mechanisms, at all levels, and at all stages of conflict management. The third pillar, protection, calls for support for women, children, vulnerable and/or marginalized groups, and especially for those suffering from CRSGBV. Finally, the fourth pillar, relief and recovery, requires the incorporation of gender perspectives into all aspects of recovery from conflict, including long-term access to healthcare and other services.⁶ Progress with implementation of UNSCR 1325 is generally monitored and measured in each of these four areas.

Since 2000, the UN Security Council adopted nine additional gender-related resolutions. Together, these UNSC resolutions form the backbone of the WPS agenda. The resolutions have incrementally updated WPS concepts and definitions to reflect changing political circumstances and the international environment. At the same time, they have continued to reinforce the continuing centrality and importance of 1325.⁷ The content of these resolutions draws on decades of work by feminist scholars, activists, and civil society organizations to raise awareness about these issues at the highest possible international level.⁸ Generally speaking, implementing WPS is about recognizing the gendered nature of defense and security, and about transforming actors and processes in order to ensure gender equality, justice, and inclusivity. All those who contribute toward these objectives, whether by recruiting more women to local police forces, working as human rights defenders, promoting international women mediators, or grappling with the complexity of WPS concepts and definitions, could be said to be part of a “WPS community of practice.”⁹ Members of the community do not always

4 The objectives of the WPS agenda are best encapsulated by the previously cited title of the UN Global Study on 1325: *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: a Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*.

5 “What is UNSCR 1325? An Explanation of the Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security,” United States Institute of Peace, accessed January 2021, https://www.usip.org/gender/peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325. See also: *UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security: Summary and Extracts for Military*, Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations and Swedish Armed Forces, December 2014, <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/siteassets/english/swedint/engelska/swedint/courses/genad/04-ncgm-unsr-wps-summary-and-extracts-for-military.pdf>; Alessia Rodriguez Di Eugenio, *1325+20=? Mapping the development of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda*, University of British Columbia, October 2019, <http://csiw-ectg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Mapping-the-development-of-the-Women-Peace-and-Security-agenda/>.

6 “What is UNSCR 1325?,” United States Institute of Peace.

7 The UN Security Council Resolutions, which combined with UNSCR 1325 collectively comprise the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, are: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019).

8 A University of British Columbia study mapped efforts back to 1915, when women cooperated across borders to elevate the status of women in the war effort and create the conditions for international negotiations that could lead to peace. Wartime also led to the creation of feminist political parties and groups like the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

9 This helpful phrase was used by Charlotte Isaksson in a virtual event hosted by the Friends of Europe. See: “From conception to inclusion: 20 years into the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,” Friends of Europe, July 2, 2020, <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/from-conception-to-inclusion-20-years-into-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda/>.



NATO Digital Dialogue on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence event organized by NATO to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, Clare Hutchinson moderates the event. Source: NATO

cooperate or even know of one another's work, but their work raises questions for security actors about what constitutes security (and for whom) and who has access to decision-making power and resources.¹⁰ By asking these questions, defense and security organizations will be better placed to deliver equal and inclusive security for all in the future.

NATO allies and partner states have begun asking these questions of themselves and developing national and regional strategies for implementing the UN WPS resolutions. In the UN system, states have the primary legal responsibility for implementing the WPS resolutions. Most of them deliver on this responsibility by adopting and periodically updating a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. Denmark was the first to adopt such a plan

in 2005, and, as of the time of this writing, there are currently eighty-six states around the world that have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs). That includes twenty-five of NATO's thirty member states and more than half of NATO's forty partner states.¹¹ The most successful NAPs are formulated through an inclusive process. They are jointly owned by their government's defense, foreign, and development ministries, and they align closely with national defense and security strategies. They are supported by enabling national legislation and budgets for implementation. Most importantly, they involve extensive collaboration with civil society, which has a wealth of expertise and experience. Civil society groups are on the front lines of traditional and new types of conflict around the world and yet they are still too often marginalized and excluded from international deliberations.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For global data on the adoption of National Action Plans around the world, see: "WPS Implementation: National-Level Implementation," PeaceWomen, accessed January 2021, <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

NATO's Engagement with Gender

NATO's first official policy on UNSCR 1325 in 2007 surprised some feminist scholars and civil society organizations. Many of them had worked for decades on this topic, mostly at the grassroots level, to shape an anti-militaristic WPS agenda and bring it to international attention. Some of them contributed directly to the framing and drafting of the UN Security Council Resolutions. At the time, they envisioned NATO not as a partner in these early efforts, but as an obstacle to their vision for an anti-militarist, feminist global peace. Cynthia Cockburn was one of these feminist scholars and peace activists whose work helped shape UNSCR 1325. She took exception to the idea that NATO, a "bastion of militarized masculinity," might co-opt UNSCR 1325 in order to make war a "a bit safer for women" or to "alert the powers that be" that women can be a resource for them in boosting operational effectiveness.¹² She and others saw NATO as responsible for physical and structural violence, and for channeling resources away from education, health, and other building blocks of feminist peace.

Since then, feminist scholarship has grown and shed light on the implications of gendered defense and security institutions and the importance of engaging all actors, including NATO, in implementing WPS resolutions. Charlotte Isaksson, a scholar and gender advisor, argues that all modern security institutions are deeply gendered both in terms of their internal gender power relationships and external conduct of missions and operations.¹³ Isaksson claims that the internal gender regime at NATO can still be described as "institutionalized hegemonic masculinity." This means that, within NATO, a particular set of masculine norms and practices has come to dominate others, and that this division of labor has been institutionally supported and maintained over time.¹⁴ British scholar Katharine Wright explains the dynamic, and how, as a result, men's voices and bodies continue to dominate NATO and labor inside NATO continues to be divided along gender lines.¹⁵ She also explains how NATO's external actions are driven by "masculinist protectionist logic." By this logic, NATO has

the power to decide what steps are necessary to protect women and girls, and then takes them. In exchange, women and girls are expected to obey and support NATO in order to stay safe.

As feminist scholarship continues to grow and becomes more mainstream in political science and international relations literature, security actors—including those in NATO—are beginning to pay more attention to gender dynamics and study their implications for security and defense. They are exploring the real and potential consequences of their internal gender regimes and gendered external missions and operations. This is a sign of progress, as WPS calls for more reflection on these dynamics, increased understanding of their implications, and further work done to tip the balance toward gender equality. NATO's regime and its approach to missions and operations are not immutable. NATO is a defense Alliance and a political community based on commitments to shared values. As a result, NATO can reinvent itself through political consultations, and in fact has already done so on multiple occasions.¹⁶ At NATO Headquarters, decisions are made through consensus in committee structures, with the North Atlantic Council (NAC) as the highest decision-making body. Consensus building allows for new and counter-narratives to develop and gain traction, including those that challenge the status quo. As a result, NATO can be the "site for experimentation" on gender in defense and security, as well as a "teaching machine" for allies and partners.¹⁷

It should not have come as such a surprise that NATO would identify as a WPS stakeholder and pursue implementation of the WPS resolutions. The impetus also came from within. In fact, individuals worked for almost fifty years inside NATO to raise awareness about women's experiences at NATO and in the armed forces. These "femocrats" worked in the system, and sometimes in spite of it, to initiate policies that could benefit women and elevate their status at NATO and in the armed forces.¹⁸ Over time, their efforts contributed to growing awareness across NATO

12 Cynthia Cockburn, "Snagged on the contradiction: NATO, UNSC Resolution 1325, and feminist responses," presented at the Annual Meeting of *No to War—No to NATO in Dublin*, April 2011, <http://no-to-nato.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/NATO13251.pdf>.

13 Charlotte Isaksson, "Who's got our 6 – Feminists, Warriors or Philanthropists?" Paper presented at Political Settlements Research Programme Presenting: New Tasks for Militaries: Rethinking new, evolving, and old norms, International Studies Association Annual Convention, Baltimore, Maryland February 22, 2017.

14 Katharine A. M. Wright, "NATO'S adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: Making the agenda a reality," *International Political Science Review Science* 37, no. 3, (2016): 350-61, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40193566>.

15 Katharine A. M. Wright, "NATO's adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security."

16 Seth Johnston, *How NATO Adapts: Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance since 1950*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

17 Cynthia Enloe first described NATO as a teaching machine in 1983, and this conceptualization has also been used by Katharine Wright. See the previously cited: "NATO'S Adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: On Women, Peace and Security Making the Agenda a Reality."

18 Ibid.



Then-NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller contributes to a panel discussion about “Women, Peace and Security” during an event organized by the Government of Canada, Women in International Security and the German Marshall Fund. Right: Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada. Source: NATO

about women’s contributions to security and their experiences in the military. This led to the launch of NATO’s first Conference on Women in 1961 and the establishment of what was at first an ad hoc Committee on Women in NATO Forces, which was later formalized and recognized by the Military Committee. Over the years, NATO held multiple follow-on conferences and updated its committee structures. Subsequent iterations of that committee led to the current NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives and its supporting office. Both are important sites for NATO’s efforts to implement the WPS resolutions.¹⁹

NATO allies and partner states also learned a series of lessons about gender in their post-Cold War missions and operations. In the 1990s, for example, they witnessed the systematic use of rape as a tactic of war in the Balkans. They recognized it as a major security issue for NATO and not just a personal tragedy for those involved, as might have been the case in the past.²⁰ Combating CRSGBV

became part of NATO’s mandate in the region. Later, in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, NATO commanders experienced how gender analysis and gender perspectives could support their operations. Female Engagement Teams (FETs) deployed to act as information conduits between the Alliance and local populations. This elevated the status of women in the forces but, at the same time, FETs were kept separate and in some ways subordinate to their male counterparts.²¹ In Afghanistan, gender also provided a useful focus area for NATO’s cooperation with partner states such as Sweden and Australia, as well as with other international organizations and civil society groups in Afghanistan. Eventually, the idea that NATO might help “liberate” women became part of the broader agenda in Afghanistan, revealing tensions between women’s protection and efforts to expand their participation.

NATO partner states also played an important role in bringing WPS to NATO’s attention in the early 2000s. European

19 For a history of NATO’s early engagement with gender, see: Katharine A. M Wright, Matthew Hurley, and Jesus Ignacio Gil Ruiz, *NATO, Gender and the Military: Women Organizing from Within*, (London: Routledge, 2019).

20 Swanee Hunt and Douglas Lute, “Inclusive Security: NATO Adapts and Adopts,” *Prism* 6, no. 1, (2016): 6-19, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26470428?refreqid=excelsior%3A3106a84211d2aa2abb45e666e521e7c5&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

21 Charlotte Isaksson, “Who’s got our 6—Feminists, Warriors or Philanthropists?”

partner states Sweden and Austria were particularly influential in framing the issue. Sweden had experience operationalizing UNSCR 1325 for the military context, and Austria with organizational implementation after championing the issue in the context of the European Union (EU). These two partner states went on to demonstrate leadership at the regional level, prioritizing and sharing their WPS expertise. They worked through both formal and informal channels to shape NATO's approach. This included through an ad hoc group, "Friends of 1325," where they coordinated their national strategies in order to maximize impact on the Alliance ahead of key meetings.²² The proposal for a NATO policy on 1325 was actually first heard in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), a fifty-nation forum for consultation between NATO allies and regional partners. The official policy still sits between NATO and the EAPC, and an additional eight NATO partners have associated themselves with the policy.²³ Katharine Wright's work shows that the EAPC effectively forced the issue into NATO's North Atlantic Council, which approved the measure immediately and adopted the NATO/EAPC Policy on UNSCR 1325 in 2007.²⁴

Once NATO had a formal policy, militaries developed a strategy for implementing 1325. In 2009, NATO's two strategic commands, Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT), adopted their own strategy for military implementation: the Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1 on Implementing UNSCR 1325 (Bi SC Directive 40-1). This directive sets out NATO's plans to incorporate gender guidance into all military structures and processes. Academics Heidi Hardt and Stéfanie von Hlatky's research shows that NATO militaries adapted quickly because of their internal incentive structures, education and training requirements, and operational mindset. NATO officials were also keen to adopt gender-related guidelines, emulating what they believed to be good practice by other international security organizations, especially the UN and the EU.²⁵ Other observers close to NATO credit the militaries' early successes in implementation with the informal nature of their engagements with gender experts and civil society at the time. In the early days, this engagement could take place informally and without the sensitivities of institutionalized cooperation.²⁶

22 Katharine A. M. Wright, 2016, pg. 355. Also, "Friends of 1325" included a mix of allies and partner states such as Austria, Croatia, Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK.

23 For a list, see: "Women, Peace and Security," NATO, last updated October 1, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91091.htm.

24 Wikileaks document quoted in Katharine A.M. Wright, "NATO's adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: Making the agenda a reality."

25 Heidi Hardt and Stéfanie von Hlatky, "NATO's About Face: Adaptation to Gender Mainstreaming in an Alliance Setting," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 5, Issue 1, (January 2020):136–159, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogz048>.

26 Personal communication with a former gender advisor, May 2020.

NATO Partnerships and WPS Delivery

Partnerships are an important means by which NATO and states and other organizations cooperate in the implementation of 1325. NATO offers a menu of options for partners to collaborate on a wide range of topics, including capabilities and interoperability, education and training, defense and security sector reform, and political consultations. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO's partnerships frameworks have developed in such a way as to give partner nations much of the power to determine the scope, focus, and intensity of their cooperation with NATO. It is always up to the partner to decide on the focus areas for their work with NATO. Several of them have promoted and prioritized WPS in their jointly agreed programs of cooperation with NATO. Close operational partners like Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Finland, Australia, and New Zealand are all very supportive of NATO's WPS agenda, and/or have included WPS in their cooperation programs. Austria and Switzerland provide voluntary contributions to NATO; Ireland and Japan have done so in the past. Others such as Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Afghanistan are seeking more WPS cooperation at present.²⁷ This speaks to the agenda's global appeal, its relevance across all areas of cooperation, and NATO's reputation as a WPS "enabler."

Partners also help advance WPS implementation at the NATO level by seeking to influence or shape NATO's internal structures and policies as they relate to the WPS agenda. Partners can coordinate informally amongst themselves, and work with like-minded allies such as Canada or Nordic member states, to build consensus within NATO committee structures. They coordinate more formally through the Partnerships and Cooperative Security Committee (PCSC) and use this framework to feed agenda items directly into the North Atlantic Council meeting agendas. In late October 2020, the PCSC hosted a webinar to mark the twentieth anniversary of 1325, take stock of NATO's progress, and discuss the continuing contributions of NATO partnerships to the WPS agenda. This event fed into subsequent North Atlantic Council and ministerial meetings, and supported discussions leading up to the 2021 NATO

Partnerships Symposium in Geneva, Switzerland. NATO's work in this area is guided by the overarching NATO/EAPC Policy and Action plan, which is periodically revised and updated by all of NATO's thirty allies, its EAPC partners, and other partners that chose to affiliate with the policy, including Afghanistan, Australia, Israel, Japan, Jordan, New Zealand, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The NATO/EAPC Policy and Action Plan is the Alliance's means of identifying its own areas of responsibility and contributions to WPS implementation. The current version identifies three key principles to steer implementation: integration, inclusiveness, and integrity.²⁸ These principles reflect NATO's internalized WPS agenda, as well as its path toward progress in the four policy areas: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery. *Integration* promotes the idea that gender equality should be made increasingly integral to all NATO policies, programs, and projects through effective gender mainstreaming.²⁹ *Inclusiveness* promotes better representation of women at all levels and in all offices. *Integrity* addresses systemic inequalities and aims to create higher levels of accountability in accordance with international frameworks.³⁰ NATO's military directive, Bi SC Directive 40-1, operationalizes 1325 for military implementation. Initially focused on battlefield success, it established gender advisor positions and described how they would work on strategic, operational, and tactical levels, and how they would advise on everything from concepts and doctrine to procedures and planning. Gender Focal Points (GFPs) are individuals with gender training that, in addition to other responsibilities, form a network across divisions and directorates.³¹ Over time, the Bi SC Directive 40-1 has become much broader in scope. The NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives also advises the Alliance in its own right, is a clearinghouse for exchange, and ensures coordination in the command structure.

Both allies and partners are engaged in gender-related education and training, and they work to ensure these programs have the necessary impact on their forces. ACT

27 Personal communication with a NATO official, March 2020.

28 *NATO/EAPC Women, Peace, and Security Policy and Action Plan 2018*, NATO, 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_09/20180920_180920-WPS-Action-Plan-2018.pdf.

29 NATO defines gender mainstreaming as: "a strategy used to achieve gender equality by assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, in all areas and at all levels, in order to assure that the concerns and experiences of both sexes are taken into account." See: *Concepts and Definitions, Women, Peace, and Security in NATO*, Office of NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, July 2019, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_07/20190709_1907-wps-glossary.pdf.

30 *NATO/EAPC Women, Peace, and Security, Policy and Action Plan 2018*, NATO.

31 The 2009 Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1 on Integrating UNSCR 1325 and gender perspective into the NATO command structure (Bi-SC 40-1) was revised and updated in 2012, and again in 2017. The current document can be found here: "BI-STRATEGIC COMMAND DIRECTIVE 040-001 (PUBLIC VERSION)," NATO, October 17, 2017, https://www.nato.int/issues/women_nato/2017/Bi-SCD_40-1_2Rev.pdf.

leads NATO's efforts in this area, but work is also carried out through the "department head" for training, which is the Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM) in Sweden.³² ACT and the department head work together to ensure that all individuals assigned to NATO have a sufficient level of education and training in order to incorporate gender perspectives into their work. This education and training is then put into practice and refined through participation in exercises. To comply with the NATO/EAPC policy and the directive, exercises must have gender analysis and perspectives woven in, which helps demonstrate how gender relates to everything that takes place in a military headquarters during actual missions and operations.³³ The GFPs involved in a recent Trident Juncture exercise, for example, published their reflections on the task, including their successes in and challenges with developing and injecting gender into the exercise narratives and situational center documents. Their aim was to help shape mindsets and demonstrate how gender analysis and perspectives should be incorporated into both institutional structures and the entire planning cycle for missions and operations.³⁴

NATO also has a senior leadership position for overseeing WPS, the secretary general's special representative for women, peace, and security (SGSR). This person guides all of NATO's work both internally and with partner states and civil society on issues related to WPS. The SGSR position is permanent and supported, along with four additional positions, as part of NATO common funding. In a new Human Security Unit, the SGSR works on both the WPS and NATO's Human Security (HS) agenda, which includes separate topics such as Children of Armed Conflict, Protection of Civilians, and human trafficking. NATO now has a two-pronged approach to WPS and HS, which should allow WPS to stand alone while also allowing it to infuse all of NATO's HS work with gender perspectives.³⁵ The SGSR also oversees the Civil Society Advisory Panel (CSAP), a framework created in 2016 to facilitate dialogue between NATO and fifteen WPS-focused civil society organizations. It constitutes a bridge between allies, partners, and civil

society in the Euro-Atlantic region, as well as in conflict-affected countries further afield. Civil society organizations are key partners for NATO as it seeks to implement the WPS agenda.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the NATO Science for Peace and Security Office (SPS) are also force multipliers for WPS implementation. The Parliamentary Assembly is a separate and consultative body that has tracked and encouraged NATO's progress in this area,³⁶ and the SPS provides support for joint research and projects that link organizations from allied and partner states. SPS-supported projects contribute to knowledge sharing and capabilities development between allies and partners. The SPS priority areas are emerging security challenges, enhancing operations and missions, and preventing crises through early warning, and WPS cuts across all of these priority areas. Between 2013 and 2018, the SPS supported thirteen collaborative projects that were specific to the WPS agenda, and which brought allies and partners together.³⁷ One example, the "1325 Scorecard," brought Women in International Security and the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy together to evaluate how well UNSCR 1325 had been implemented in various national armed forces. It shed light on key indicators and recommendations for standardization and interoperability in NATO, and helped shape NATO's work with partners in this area.³⁸

Finally, NATO's work with the EU, other international organizations, and non-state actors is likely to become increasingly important in the years ahead. NATO's conception of security is broadening to include issues that overlap with the European Union's mandate, and for which the EU has the relevant set of legal, financial, and regulatory tools. The EU, too, adopted a policy on WPS in 2008 and, like NATO, it appointed its own high representative for WPS in 2015. Cooperation between NATO and the EU, however, remained largely informal and ad hoc for much of the first decade. This was in part due to different membership rosters, organizational cultures, and styles. It was not until 2018 that NATO and the EU identified WPS and

- 32 "Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations," Swedish Armed Forces, accessed January 2021, <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/swedint/nordic-centre-for-gender-in-military-operations/>. For more on the history of NATO's efforts to build gender machinery, see: Katharine A.M. Wright, "NATO's adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: Making the agenda a reality." For more on military incentives to create such machinery, see: Heidi Hardt and Stéfanie von Hlatky, "NATO's About Face: Adaptation to Gender Mainstreaming in an Alliance Setting."
- 33 Charlotte Isaksson, "Gender Perspectives and its Place within ACO Now and in the Future," *the Three Swords Magazine*, December 2015, https://www.jwc.nato.int/images/stories/_news_items_/2015/Gender_ACO_dec2015.pdf.
- 34 "Gender Perspective during Trident Juncture 15 CPX," *the Three Swords Magazine*, December 2015, https://www.jwc.nato.int/images/stories/_news_items_/2015/Interview_TRJE15CPX_gender.pdf.
- 35 Personal communication with a NATO official, March 25, 2020.
- 36 *Advancing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda*, NATO Parliamentary Assembly Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, April 14, 2020, <https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=sites/default/files/2020-06/027%20CDS%2020%20E%20-%20ADVANCING%20THE%20WOMEN,%20PEACE%20AND%20SECURITY%20AGENDA.pdf>.
- 37 *NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme 2018 Annual Report*, NATO Emerging Security Challenges Division, 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_12/20191217_SPS-Annual-Report-2018.pdf.
- 38 Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, Sonja Stojanović-Gajić, Carolyn Washington, and Brooke Stedman, *The 1325 Scorecard: Preliminary Findings*, the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme, 2015, <https://wiisglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/UNSCR-1325-Scorecard-Final-Report.pdf>.

elevated it to one of their four priority areas for cooperation.³⁹ Since then, NATO and the EU have worked to create shared language on sexual exploitation and abuse, as an important first step toward aligning their approaches and building transparency and accountability in both organizations.⁴⁰ Increased transparency and accountability will allow NATO and the EU to explore ways to gradually expand cooperation. It will also help the Alliance and its partners to continue broadening their conceptions of WPS beyond a capabilities issue, and pursue more fundamental institutional transformation.⁴¹

Other organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union (AU), for example, also have policies and action plans on implementing UNSCR 1325. They all stand to benefit from increasing collaboration and exchange. Together with the EU, UN, and AU, NATO co-founded a Regional Acceleration of Resolution 1325 (RAR), with the OSCE joining in as an observer. This platform was intended to promote the sharing of information and knowledge, but needs to be institutionalized and funded to ensure that it is able to deliver on its

mandate. The UN has a wealth of expertise and experience that the others can tap into, including in areas of increasing interest to NATO, such as gender in pandemic, disaster, and humanitarian relief. The current SGSR Clare Hutchinson brings her personal experience as a UN gender advisor to NATO, and hosts a UN voluntary contribution in the form of a staff member in her office.⁴² Cooperation and exchange is still too dependent on the efforts of a few committed individuals, however. The RAR and other such platforms can provide opportunities for this kind of exchange and learning if they are institutionalized and properly funded.

“Sometimes we relate gender too much to standards of behavior, codes of conduct, and how many women we have in the armed forces. Gender is more than that; it is a different way of looking at the world,” says Commander Ella van den Heuvel, former International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Gender Advisor.⁴³

39 The president of the European Council, the president of the European Commission, and the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation (2018),” NATO, press release, July 10, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156626.htm. See also: “Council conclusions on Women, Peace and Security,” Council of the European Union, December 10, 2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37412/st15086-en18.pdf>.

40 Personal Communication with a NATO official, May 2020.

41 Katharine A. M. Wright, “Promoting the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda,” *The EU and NATO: The Essential Partners*, Gustav Lindstrom and Thierry Tardy (eds.), European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2019, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/EU%20and%20NATO.pdf>.

42 Author interview with a NATO official, March 2020.

43 “Women, peace and security,” NATO, last updated March 8, 2011, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_71247.htm?selectedLocale=en.

Achievements and Continuing Challenges

NATO has a diverse array of WPS policies and action plans, but it has faced some persistent challenges around implementation. This is in part because the WPS agenda is disruptive for states, security organizations, and armed forces alike. It asks them to examine assumptions, internal structures, and processes, and to pay attention to things that they have not considered important for their mandate in the past.⁴⁴ It also asks them to think differently about security and defense, and to seek awareness about what constitutes security and for whom, who has access to resources and decision-making power, and how their actions and inactions affect women, men, boys, and girls differently. For a large bureaucracy and intergovernmental alliance comprising thirty member states and an additional forty partner states like NATO, this presents a series of challenges. Reviews point to issues around leadership and resources, dissemination of guidance, and transparency and accountability.⁴⁵

One challenge relates to national priorities of the member states, and to the politics of decision making by consensus in committee structures. A majority of allies and partners have National Action Plans on 1325, but many of them still lack sufficient levels of support in their national capitals to enable legislation or budgets for implementation. Also, variation among the member states' NAPs in terms of their scope, focus areas, and priorities further complicates implementation at the NATO level. The Alliance's "big four" in terms of defense spending—the United States, United Kingdom (UK), France, and Germany—all have National Action Plans, but none has been willing to champion WPS in the NAC in such a way that promotes transformational change. Scholar Seth Johnston has studied how NATO has adapted itself in the past, and argues that at critical junctures, NATO's ability to adapt has tended to reflect pressure from the United States and/or France, the UK, or Germany.⁴⁶ These four have taken some responsibility and shown some international leadership—the UK in development, for

example—but none has championed the issue at NATO or paved the way for smaller allies or partners to take the lead. Moreover, five allies and nine partner states still have no National Action plan at all.⁴⁷ These political circumstances make it difficult for smaller allies and for partners to work together to provide that leadership at the highest levels in NATO's committee structure.⁴⁸

Another challenge relates to the gender advisory structure. NATO's Bi-strategic Command Directive established a robust gender advisory structure, but NATO has struggled to empower its gender advisors with the tools they need to be successful in their jobs. In the early days of NATO's FET deployments, observers argue that NATO couldn't attract the right talent, and that parts of the team lacked the language skills, gender expertise, and experience required for the job. They also suggest that the FETs did not receive enough support from the NATO chain of command to build necessary local relationships, and that they lacked a clear set of objectives or an end goal to work toward.⁴⁹ Former ACO Gender Advisor Charlotte Isaksson has argued that NATO also left too many positions vacant in the early years, and that undermined the gender advisory structure from the beginning, as well as interfered with the NATO chain of command.⁵⁰ The gender advisors themselves have also reported insufficient understanding or clarity about their mission goals, and insufficient resources needed to collaborate with local populations in a meaningful way. These deficiencies are apparent in interviews conducted by scholars and practitioners Megan Bastick and Claire Duncanson, as well as a general perception of resistance among gender advisors' peers in accepting gender perspectives as relevant for their work.⁵¹

This general resistance reflects both NATO's entrenched gender regime and the challenges associated with dissemination of information and guidance. One high-level review by the Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations in

44 Matthew Hurley, "Watermelons and Weddings: Making Women, Peace, and Security 'Relevant' at NATO through (Re)telling Stories of Success," Sheffield Hallam University, 2018, http://shura.shu.ac.uk/18823/1/HURLEY_Watermelons_%26_Weddings_FINAL.pdf.

45 Helene Lackenbauer and Richard Langlais, *Review of the Practical Implications of UNSCR 1325 for the Conduct of NATO-led Operations and Missions*, Swedish Defence Research Agency, May 2013, https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2013_10/20131021_131023-UNSCR1325-review-final.pdf.

46 Seth Johnston, *How NATO Adapts: Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance since 1950*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

47 As of the end of 2020, NATO allies without a NAP included Greece, Turkey, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. Partner states without a NAP included Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Malta, Russia, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Colombia, Mongolia, and Pakistan. See: "WPS Implementation: National-Level Implementation," PeaceWomen.

48 Personal communication with a NATO official, November 2020.

49 For a summary of reviews of early FET deployments, see Angeline Lewis, "WPS, Gender and Foreign Military Interveners: Experience from Iraq and Afghanistan," in *Rethinking Transitional Gender Justice*, eds. R. Shackel and L. Fiske, (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2019), 121-144.

50 Helene Lackenbauer and Richard Langlais, *Review of the Practical Implications of UNSCR 1325 for the Conduct of NATO-led Operations and Missions*; and Charlotte Isaksson, "Gender Perspectives and its Place within ACO Now and in the Future."

51 Megan Bastick and Claire Duncanson, "Agents of Change? Gender Advisors in NATO Militaries," *International Peacekeeping* 25, Issue 4 (2018): 554-577, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2018.1492876>.



More than 850 Mongolian peacekeepers have been awarded the United Nations Medal for their commitment and service to the UN and the people of South Sudan during a ceremony in Bentiu. Source: UNMISS/Amanda Voisard

2013 found that a majority of commanders still did not know about the 2009 directive, though they said that they valued gender perspectives in military operations.⁵² Academic interviews carried out by Katharine Wright show that many NATO officials still misunderstood the WPS agenda more than a decade after the UNSC adoption of 1325. Some officials saw it as being “all about jobs,” or a “women’s issue,” or a nice-to-have diversity policy that no one could be seen to openly oppose.⁵³ These interpretations of WPS, years after the initial NATO/EAPC Policy and the Bi-Strategic Command Directive were adopted in 2007 and 2009, respectively, show just how persistent misunderstandings can be about UNSCR 1325. It demonstrates that NATO officials had not yet appreciated that the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is a legal responsibility for states under the UN and also among NATO’s primary interests as a defense and security organization. This kind

of misunderstanding reinforces, rather than challenges, the institutional organization that has empowered certain masculine voices and norms over others. There is awareness about the need for change, but NATO discussions about WPS still take place largely among women, reinforcing stereotypes and placing the burden of change on the small number of women with access to decision-making power, political capital, and resources within NATO.

NATO has made progress to recruit more women, but women alone cannot shoulder the burden of institutional change. The Alliance can address this challenge by advancing gender mainstreaming, which it defines as a strategy to achieve “gender equality by assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, in all areas and at all levels, in order to assure that the concerns and experiences of both sexes are taken into account.”⁵⁴ In the 2018

52 Helene Lackenbauer and Richard Langlais, *Review of the Practical Implications of UNSCR 1325 for the Conduct of NATO-led Operations and Missions*.

53 Katharine A. M. Wright, “NATO’S adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: Making the agenda a reality.”

54 See: *Concepts and Definitions, Women, Peace, and Security in NATO*, Office of NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, July 2019, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_07/20190709_1907-wps-glossary.pdf.



First Lieutenant Taylor Martin, Commander of US 720th Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Company, holding a mine detection tool during a training exercise at Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo. The EOD team's role is to help clear some of the thousands of explosive remnants of war left over from past conflicts in Kosovo. EOD teams form part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), a multinational peacekeeping force mandated under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999 to ensure a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for all communities in Kosovo. *Source:* NATO

Annual Report, NATO's secretary general reported that women accounted for 27 percent of staff NATO-wide, up from 26 percent in 2017. In the International Staff, women made up 40 percent of the total; 16.8 percent of personnel in the International Military Staff were women. Ten Allied permanent representatives to NATO were women, and six women were serving as ministers of defense in NATO member states.⁵⁵ The number of women in senior positions has been increasing since the 2002 launch of the Gender and Diversity Program, and 25 percent of leadership positions were held by women in 2018.⁵⁶ Their high visibility, however, contrasts with the rest of the Alliance. The majority of

women in the International Staff are still in administrative roles. Labor is still largely divided along gender lines, and there are few senior positions filled by female civilian staff in all other NATO entities. Even by NATO's own reporting, when compared with the same grade levels in the UN system, NATO has some "catching up to do."⁵⁷ While increasing women's participation is a pillar of 1325, women cannot be expected to act as a bloc or drive all organizational change. Only institutionally-driven gender mainstreaming paired with efforts to achieve better gender balance can ensure NATO's future ability to act as a role model and as a positive change agent.⁵⁸

55 *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2018*, NATO, 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20190315_sgar2018-en.pdf.

56 Two women currently serve as assistant secretary generals, two as principal officers, and one on the Military Committee. See: "Principal officials," NATO, last updated December 2, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/who_is_who_51639.htm; and "Historic moment for the NATO Military Committee," NATO, last updated January 6, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_172364.htm.

57 At the UN, women's representation is 43 percent overall and 35 percent in senior leadership positions (P5 and above). See: "Driving diversity at NATO," NATO, March 7, 2019, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/03/07/driving-diversity-at-nato/index.html>.

58 "Gender Perspective during Trident Juncture 15 CPX," *the Three Swords Magazine*.

Recommendations for NATO's Partnerships

At the 2019 NATO Leaders Meeting, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called upon a group of experts to reflect on how the Alliance might adapt to stay strong militarily, strengthen itself politically, and expand its global reach. The experts deliberated over the course of 2020 and published a report with more than 130 recommendations to steer NATO's adaptation.⁵⁹ These recommendations emphasize the enduring importance of flexible partnerships, both as tools for pursuing overlapping strategic objectives and for fostering a sense of shared security, and for shaping the regional and international environment. The recommendations also address threats and challenges "from every direction," and they treat Human Security and Women, Peace, and Security as one of these dimensions.⁶⁰ The report does distinguish between the two, however: HS is still predominantly operational, while WPS calls for both an operational dimension and an overhaul of NATO's internal structures and processes.

WPS should not be defined and grouped among the Alliance's external 'threats' and 'challenges.' Rather, WPS should be defined as part of the Alliance's core political values, distinguishing it from rivals and adversaries. Implementing WPS policies and action plans is a means to a stronger and more relevant political and military Alliance. It will foster creativity, resilience, and strength by helping NATO

think more creatively and comprehensively about the evolving security challenges, enhance the Alliance's value and relevance to its publics, better understand the environments in which it operates and the potential impacts its policies and programs may have, and ensure strategic and operational effectiveness on the ground. More broadly, emphasizing the value of human dignity and security differentiates NATO from authoritarian rivals and terrorist groups, which are among the world's human rights abusers.⁶¹

This paper makes three sets of recommendations for NATO and its partners. First and foremost, the Alliance should focus on deemphasizing the operational focus, and move WPS away from the political margins and closer to

NATO's core. This requires doubling down on implementation of NATO's robust policies and action plans and addressing the challenges around changing mindsets, as well as boosting leadership through transparency and accountability. NATO should also strengthen institutional support for its WPS transformations and commit more resources to that outcome. Second, NATO should consider expanding WPS cooperation with partners across a range of activities from education and training to capacity building, interoperability, and reform. It should also expand collaboration with non-state partners, especially the UN, the EU, and civil society organizations. Finally, NATO should recommit to WPS publicly, with a renewed sense of purpose and a clear and simple message about the strategic relevance of WPS for twenty-first century security.

1. Leadership, Transparency, and Accountability

NATO is recognized as a leader among international organizations for embarking on a process of internal institutional reform and its robust WPS policies and action plans. Because of NATO's global prominence and its role in standard setting, NATO should focus on enhancing its leadership in the years ahead, and continuing to set an example for allies and partners around the world. NATO can achieve this by increasing transparency internally, especially between its civilian and its military bodies; building more accountability mechanisms internally at all levels; and ensuring adequate resources are committed from allies, and increasingly from NATO common funding. NATO and partners should continue to work together to incorporate WPS as a crosscutting agenda in all the work they do together, from exercises to consultations to reform. As Mackenzie Eaglen put it, when it comes to WPS implementation the old adage applies: "actions speak louder than words."⁶²

To enhance NATO's leadership, it should strive to empower its gender advisors so they can deliver more value. These positions are crucial for WPS implementation and they should be bid out and competitive. They should go to candidates that have the right expertise and experience to excel in these roles. Candidates should have a proven record of "technical skills, competencies, and experience" in order to "provide appropriate, in-depth guidance to integrate a gender lens, and a gender analysis, throughout the

59 NATO 2030: *United for a New Era*, NATO.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Mackenzie Eaglen, "Practicing What We Preach: Committing to the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy Here at Home," *Real Clear Defense*, July 9, 2020, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/07/09/practicing_what_we_preach_committing_to_the_women_peace_and_security_strategy_here_at_home_115454.html.



Norwegian “Gender Advisor” Ada Fuglset in Afghanistan. For an Afghan female it is shameful to be searched by a stranger, which means a man can’t do it without bringing her dishonor. To counter this, one can use female security forces or female police to search women in these operations. *Source: Norwegian Military*

process of policy formulation and program development.”⁶³ NATO should consider lengthening or expanding the training course at NCGM and the Annual Conference to provide additional opportunities for professional development, including more training, resources, and access to mentor relationships.⁶⁴ Indeed, gender advisors should see a career path before them, and they should be able to progress along a clear professional development path. In missions and operations, they need access to commanders, clarity on mission objectives and the human terrain, and resources to build critical relationships, including with civil society. The gender advisory structure is in place, but empowering

gender advisors should be institutionally and nationally driven, and not dependent on individual personalities.

Additionally, NATO should improve transparency and accountability internally and set an example for its partners. Transparency between its civilian and military bodies is particularly important. There is a growing sense among some partners and in NATO Headquarters that the WPS agenda is getting lost in translation between NATO’s civilian and military offices. Some feel that the civilian agenda has advanced more rapidly than the military agenda in terms of its WPS concepts and plans. They feel that guidelines for

63 Stephenie Foster, “Gender Advisors Key to Effective Policy,” Council on Foreign Relations Women in Foreign Policy Program, September 14, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/gender-advisors-key-effective-policy>.

64 Joan Johnson-Freese and Andrea Goldstein, “How the Pentagon Can Build on NATO’s Success With Women, Peace & Security,” *Real Clear Defense*, May 13, 2019, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/05/13/how_the_pentagon_can_build_on_natos_success_with_women_peace_security_114418.html.

the military operationalization of the WPS agenda have not kept pace. Others argue that the coupling of NATO's WPS agenda and its HS agenda into a single unit risks obscuring the fact that militaries have legal responsibilities for WPS implementation that don't exist in the areas designated as Human Security topics. The latter remain predominantly operational. There are some bright spots in NATO's civilian-military cooperation in this area, however, and the recently agreed policy on sexual exploitation and abuse is an achievement for civilian-military cooperation as well as a step forward for NATO's WPS implementation.⁶⁵ Looking ahead, it is imperative that NATO distinguish between WPS and HS agendas and foster transparency and civilian-military cooperation.

Finally, NATO should improve its methods of data collection, analysis, presentation, and dissemination. NATO collects enormous amounts of data from its missions and operations, as well as from its allies and partners. If NATO were to improve its sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data collection, it could better monitor its implementation progress. It is also likely that the data would demonstrate the importance of WPS for NATO operations and missions, as well as for NATO's continuing success and relevance. The Committee on Gender Perspectives has begun standardizing its data requests in order to facilitate comparisons both between states and over time. This is a step in the right direction and it has already made the Summary of National Reports a more useful document. The Alliance should consider standardizing gender-sensitive approaches to all of its data collection, and it should prioritize funding for studies that include more sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis on topics that are relevant for NATO. Classification levels also matter. While those levels are set by the states, NATO should encourage sharing of relevant data with civil society organizations that may be making their own risk assessments in conflict situations. The routine collection of gender-sensitive data combined with increased leadership, transparency, and accountability within NATO should become the norm.⁶⁶

2. Expand and Enhance Flexible Partnerships

NATO should expand and enhance collaboration with state and non-state partners alike, and especially with the UN, the EU, and civil society, on WPS-related topics. The UN is the sponsor for the WPS agenda, but states bear

the responsibility to implement the resolutions, and civil society effectively forms the bedrock for the broader social agenda. Civil society experience, expertise, and persistence helped bring international attention to gender, defense, and security in the first place, and some civil society members helped draft UNSCR 1325 and subsequent UNSC resolutions. Their work has also helped update and adapt the agenda and contributed to an emerging set of global gender norms. They are important partners for the Alliance in its efforts to understand WPS aims and objectives, advance implementation, and ultimately help NATO deliver on its core tasks. Civil society also helps inform risk assessment and early warning, combat disinformation, build public trust and resilience, counter violent extremism, and strengthen missions and operations. And yet civil society is still marginalized from security deliberations, including at NATO. Gender consultant Louise Allen argues their participation is still “contested, politicized, and even dangerous” in many parts of the world.⁶⁷

NATO boasts a network of thirty allies, forty partner states, and a handful of partner organizations, and can set an example that helps transform this relationship into a more cooperative and inclusive one. Some tension between civil society and the military should be expected because of their distinct cultures and objectives, but more should be done to build mutual trust and facilitate cooperation when it suits both sides or becomes necessary. NATO can help to build a foundation for increasing trust by recognizing civil society's contributions more formally and by facilitating their work. The Alliance began consulting civil society about gender more than a decade ago and formalized a WPS-focused Civil Society Advisory Panel (CSAP) in 2016. The panel is now in its second iteration and comprises fifteen different WPS-focused civil society members: five from allies, five from partners, and five from conflict affected countries. This panel can begin to reverse the patterns of exclusion. It can help build mutual understanding and open the doors to more fruitful collaboration. Efforts should focus on expanding NATO's receptivity to civil society perspectives and bringing them closer to NATO's decision-making bodies.

An effective partnership with civil society, however, depends on civil society independence. The CSAP members and other groups that engage with NATO need to have complete confidence in their independence from

65 “The NATO Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,” NATO, January 27, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_173038.htm.

66 Jamila Seftaoui, “Women, Peace, and Security: What it Takes to Achieve Relevant Impacts,” in *NATO Resilience and Resolution: A Compendium of Essays on Women, Peace and Security*, NATO, March 8, 2019, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_03/20190307_190308-wps-essays-en.pdf.

67 Louise Allen, “Women Civil Society – the Bedrock of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda,” in *NATO Resilience and Resolution: A Compendium of Essays on Women, Peace and Security*, NATO, March 8, 2019, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_03/20190307_190308-wps-essays-en.pdf.



Annual Conference of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives: The Executive Committee of the NCGP. Source: NATO

the Alliance itself, from their national governments, and armed forces. This confidence is fundamental for the development of trust, understanding, and collaboration. The Alliance should also increase its transparency with CSAP by declassifying draft WPS policies and guidelines in their earliest stages and opening them up to the external scrutiny of expert civil society panels. It could also present civil society with assessments of its implementation record, objectives, and continuing challenges. The CSAP is still relatively new and the Alliance updated its terms of reference in order to reduce membership and build a more focused and cohesive group. Efforts have also been made to ensure that voices from conflict-affected states such as Kosovo, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Georgia are brought into the fold.⁶⁸ If NATO ensured more reliable funding for these members, a smaller group could deliver better results on WPS research, training programs, combating disinformation, enhancing resilience, and building understanding between NATO and other organizations.

Finally, diversity and inclusion policies can help build public trust in the Alliance and ensure its continuing relevance. NATO must bring more men into its WPS discussions, and it must engage more women and diverse groups of constituents in its other debates. NATO discussions about WPS are still too often discussions among only women. This is problematic because so long as women remain under-represented in NATO's core decision-making, WPS remains in the political margins, too. NATO's leadership should work to ensure better gender balance at all discussions about NATO's WPS implementation plans. At the same time, the Alliance should be proactive in engaging more women, and a more diverse group of its own constituents in general. This is increasingly important for the Alliance because its rivals and adversaries are actively working to exacerbate societal divisions, undermine public trust, and discredit the Alliance. Public diplomacy has a role to play in bringing more women's voices closer to NATO's decision-making bodies and ensuring that NATO's messaging

⁶⁸ Personal communication with NATO official, June 2020.

is honest and genuine. The CSAP panel has made the same recommendation: NATO's public diplomacy and messaging must genuinely reflect NATO's policies, programs, and activities.⁶⁹

3. Recommit with a Renewed Sense of Purpose

As NATO adapts to a new environment and considers an updated Strategic Concept, it should recommit to WPS with a sense of purpose and a clear and simple message. Otherwise, WPS risks being associated with NATO's past missions and operations, rather than with the Alliance's future security—many will consider it outdated before it has achieved its objectives. NATO will lose its momentum, and so might some of the allies, partner states, and partner organizations.

In October 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNSCR 1325 celebrated its twenty-year anniversary. NATO marked the occasion by taking stock of what has been achieved over the course of two decades and reflecting on the work that remains to be done in the years ahead. WPS is likely to become increasingly important for international security in the future as NATO's conception of security has broadened significantly. NATO now considers climate, energy, cyber, human security, and public health, among others, in addition to its traditional focus on state security and sovereignty. The Alliance is also looking for ways to address internal challenges that stem from political disunity in NATO, as well as challenges to democracy and societal resilience. There has been some backsliding

on NATO's commitments to its political values inside the Alliance, just as rivals and adversaries are actively promoting alternative political concepts and models of governance. And yet, WPS is a thematic agenda with political traction all around the world, including in conflict-affected countries and among NATO's potential adversaries. For those committed to implementation, WPS can help build internal cohesion, increase resilience, and strengthen the foundations of peace.

NATO is already a recognized leader in this area. The Alliance and its partners have adopted a robust regional policy and action plan for 1325 that is widely recognized as the right approach, and it is adapting its institutions to promote inclusivity, integration, and integrity. These are the three principles that guide NATO's policy and action plan, and they are also the building blocks of a stronger NATO. If the Alliance can strengthen its leadership, improve transparency and accountability, and enhance partnerships with the UN, the EU, and civil society, it will be well placed to help drive implementation in the WPS agenda's third decade. Looking ahead, NATO should continue to focus on implementation and UNSCR 1325's four pillars—prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery. Most importantly, it should improve gender mainstreaming and adapt its institutions, moving WPS from the political margins of the Alliance to its core. A clear and simple message about its strategic relevance will garner support and understanding. WPS aligns with the political values that underpin NATO—values that are critical for NATO's future success in a more competitive world.

69 Report of the 4th Annual Meeting of the Civil Society Advisory panel on Women, Peace and Security, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, January 17, 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_files2014/assets/pdf/2020/2/pdf/200211-casp-report-en.pdf.

About the Author



Dr. Lisa A. Aronsson is a nonresident senior fellow at the Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security at the Atlantic Council. She currently serves as a research fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University. She is a defense policy analyst with more than ten years of experience working in international think tanks, governments, and universities. She is affiliated with the Transatlantic Security Initiative and leads projects related to NATO, EU, UK defense, gender, European security, and transatlantic cooperation. Previously, she worked as an analyst for the Congressional Research Service where she completed a study on the United States and its European allies' responses to emerging technologies in defense, and she has worked as a research fellow and program head at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in London. At RUSI she led the Institute's work on US defense policy, UK-US cooperation, and transatlantic relations. She also lectured for UK Foreign Office and Ministry of Defense training courses, taught undergraduate courses at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and published her work in RUSI publications as well as in *European Security*, and the *Wall Street Journal* among others. Prior to joining RUSI, Lisa completed a PhD in International Relations and a Masters in International and Cold War History at LSE. She began her career as a newsroom assistant at the Associated Press Bureau in Rome after completing her BA at Wellesley College.

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